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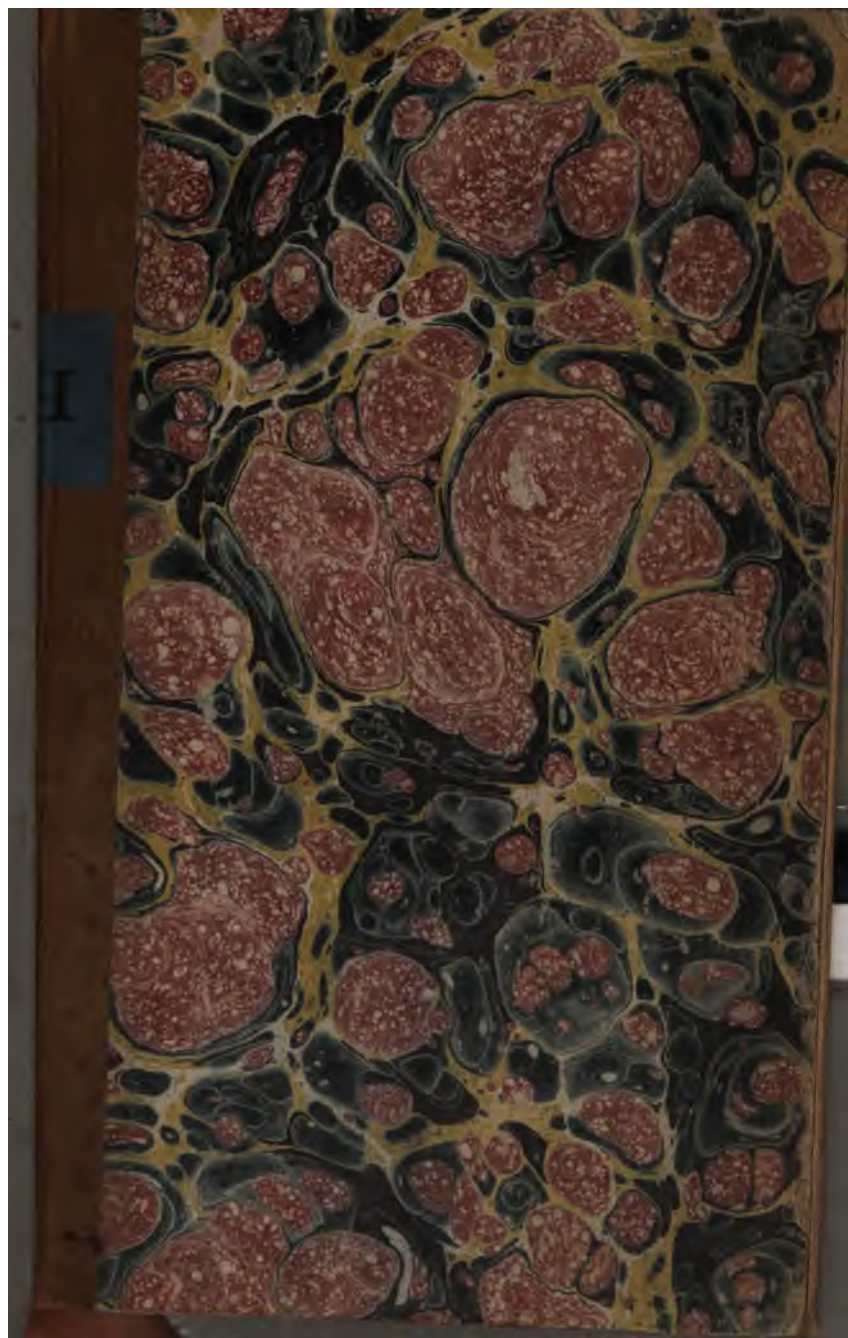
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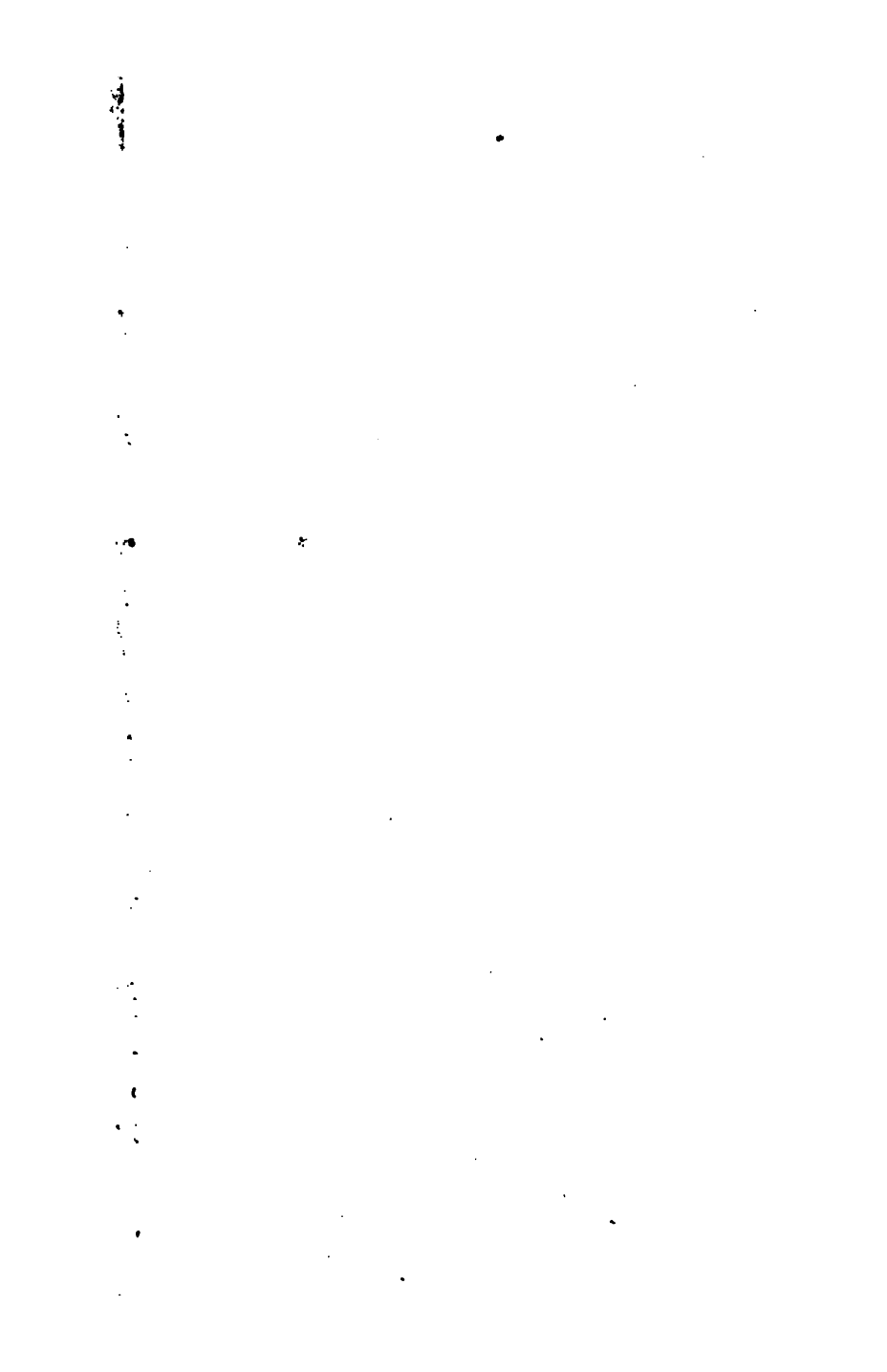


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REMARKS ON A LETTER

LATELY PUBLISHED

BY MR. HARDING,

IN DEFENCE OF THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

OF THE

CHURCH PASTORAL-AID SOCIETY.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE CLAYTON, M.A.

RECTOR OF WARMINGHAM, CHESHIRE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN giving publicity to the following remarks, the author can truly avow that his object is not to impair the efficiency of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, or check it in its work of benevolence; but, on the contrary, by exposing the fallacy of the arguments used in defence of its practice, and by showing the meagreness of the facts on which its principle of action is based, to induce those connected with it to perform a duty they owe to the Church at large, that is, temperately to review their position, and candidly to weigh the evidence brought forward against them; and, if it be such as to lead them to imagine that the obnoxious rules are not altogether in accordance with Church principles, then, for the sake of peace, and for the furtherance of their excellent undertaking, not to be afraid or slow to remove the cause of complaint: but if, on the other hand, still confident, after careful consideration, of their right to the title of "Church," and the support of churchmen, then, by a full, fair, and official vindication of their Society, to meet the accusations brought against it, by proving that they have no just foundation.

WARMINGHAM RECTORY,
March 23, 1841.

REMARKS,

&c.

I MAY first observe, that Mr. Harding's letter can—though, as he himself says, intended as a vindication of the Society's plans—be hardly received as an answer to the letter of Dr. Molesworth, for the doctor's charges are levelled against the Society, and he calls upon it for an “official vindication;” (Dr. M. p. 8.) and though the secretary to the Society, in his letter to Mr. Clark, of Nov. 9, 1840, (Dr. M. p. 35.) signifies its willingness to maintain its principles and practice, yet it has not yet done so, for it may either approve or disclaim altogether Mr. H.'s letter, as it shall see expedient; and therefore, as far as the Society is concerned, no answer has been given, and the only thing to be concluded is that, in its secretary's words, it does not “deem it necessary to do so.”

I shall first deal with the main question, which, at page 4, Mr. H. thus puts forth: “The point of difference between him (Dr. M.) and us is this; we believe that the Church Pastoral-Aid Society is framed and conducted in perfect agreement with our ecclesiastical law; Dr. Molesworth affirms the contrary.”

This is, I think, a fair statement of the question ; but at page 7 the whole face of the case is changed, and Mr. Harding asserts the real point at issue to be, "Do we or do we not break any rule of the Church of England by such a plan of procedure as we have adopted?" and, deserting his former ground, he makes this latter the basis of his argument. As a foundation, either will fail him, but I shall adhere to the former; for I might perhaps in a modified sense be ready to grant that the Society does not *actually* break any rule of the Church, but I deny at once that the Society "is framed and conducted in perfect agreement with our ecclesiastical law." We know it is possible, without actual infringement of any specific rule, or "distinct and positive ordinance," (Mr. H. p. 21.) by mere addition to it, to act contrary to the spirit of the law, and thus not to be in agreement with it.

Now the law, as far as the matter in debate before us is concerned, is contained, I apprehend, in the 34th Canon of 1603, which treats of "the quality of such as are to be made ministers," and runs thus: "No Bishop shall henceforth admit any person into sacred orders except moreover he shall then exhibit letters testimonial of his good life and conversation under the seal of some college in Cambridge or Oxford, where before he remained, or of three or four grave ministers, together with the subscription and testimony of other credible persons, who have known his life and behaviour by the space of three years next before." Now I must remark in reference to this canon, that the Church here distinctly lays down what testimonial the candidate for holy orders shall present to the Bishop, and by him be deemed sufficient to proceed to examination¹; but here the

¹ The 48th canon treats of curates, but I believe all the bishops require, even where the person to serve the curacy is already ordained, the same testimonials as if he were only a candidate for ordination.

Society steps in and declares that the testimonials appointed by the Church are insufficient, (Mr. H. p. 17.) or at least so insufficient that it has no faith in ministers ordained or licensed on such testimony, and will therefore refuse to support them; in other words, the testimonials required and appointed by the Church are altogether, as far as the Society is concerned, to be esteemed a dead letter, unless its fiat be attached to them: and this Mr. H. thinks a *perfect agreeing with ecclesiastical law*.

I turn now to the grounds on which he justifies this interference.

The first is detailed in pages 9 and 10 of his letter; though I confess I have considerable difficulty in understanding him, for his statements seem directly at variance in two passages here quoted, and which immediately follow each other. After stating that the Church introduces a third party between the incumbent and bishop, Mr. H. adds, "I do not mean to say that I consider our Society's claim as *exactly analogous* to this, or that this regulation of the Church is a *warrant for our proceedings*;" Mr. H. then adds, "what I do mean is only thus much, that I think it might be replied to those who complain with Dr. Molesworth of an interference with the rights of incumbents, and with the office of the bishops, *if any other party claims* to exercise a judgment on the suitability of clergymen for cures, *that the Church herself has admitted the principle* by requiring a certain class of persons to take this very responsibility." Before I apply myself to the train of argument contained in the last passage, it may be well to observe that the Presbyters of the Church are not a party *claiming* to exercise a judgment on the suitability of clergymen; so far from it, they only sign or refuse to sign a candidate's testimonials *when called upon*—they make no *claim*; but what they do, is done in *obedience to the Church*. I have said that I have some difficulty in understanding Mr. H., but he

cannot think I am acting unfairly by him, if I suppose that by the words, "the Church herself has admitted the principle," he means the principle of the Society's interference; for if the matter contained in pages 9 and 10 of his Letter mean any thing, it is that in the Church herself a precedent is found for the Society's practice. There is a plausibility of argument in this, but nothing more. True, indeed, between the incumbent and the bishop a party intervenes, but who appointed that party? I answer, the Church; and therefore, argues Mr. H., the Church has appointed one party, and thus the precedent is established by which the Society (not the Church) may appoint another, viz., itself, to supersede the testimonials of incumbents and presbyters². Let us proceed with this mode of reasoning one step further, and the Society may say, the Church has vested a veto in the bishop after examination of the candidate, and acting on this *Church principle*, the Church Pastoral-Aid Society claims also a veto to which the bishop himself must yield; for the argument, if good in the former case, must be so in the latter. But let us not close our eyes to the true extent of the Society's interference: it is not that the Society lays claim merely to authority co-equal with the Presbyters³, but it lays claim to vastly superior authority. The Church leaves the candidate to select the ministers and other credible persons who are to testify to his conduct, &c.; but the Church Pastoral-Aid Society takes from him this liberty of choice, and obtrudes itself as alone judge, and obliges candidates to submit to its scrutiny⁴; yet this we are told is practice in perfect agreement with ecclesiastical law.

² If this argument be correct, we ought to alter the XXth Article of Religion, and read, "The Church Pastoral-Aid Society hath power," &c.

³ I have already shown that no claim is made by the Presbyters.

⁴ If I wished to oppose the opinion that the Society had not broken any distinct and positive ordinance, I think I should not be far

In the second place, Mr. H. founds his defence of this interference, if I may so say, on the necessity of the case, *i. e.* on account of the delinquency of the clergy. I will admit (though I shall have to refer to the passage hereafter) the truth of his observations, pages 12, 13, 14, but I do not admit it as any vindication of the Society's interference; for if this delinquency of ministers justifies it, equally would it justify a veto over the bishop; and, though Mr. H. does not seem aware of it, the Society does thus virtually supersede the bishop, for its claim and practice speak this language: "You, my lord, with your presbyters and incumbents, have hitherto so mismanaged affairs, that it is needful for some one to interfere: the persons you admit to the ministry are so bad that something must be done: now I am of opinion that I (not the Church) am fittest to interfere, and acting on this opinion, I shall henceforth, wherever I can, prevent you from ordaining or licensing to curacies without my sanction." It is a Society therefore which virtually, I do not say intentionally, would control, not be guided by, the Church; and this also I conceive to be not exactly in agreement with ecclesiastical law.

At page 14, Mr. H. introduces a third cause to justify the interference complained of, and which he seems to regard as the main stay of his vindication, and this is conscience. I am the last person, I trust, that would make light of conscience, or deride those who appeal to it; but I must observe, that not every action prompted by conscience is necessarily good and right, and the appeal should rather be to the "law written in the heart," (Rom. ii. 15.) the *principles* and *rules* by which the conscience is *guided*,

wrong in adducing this instance, which bears upon the face of it (I wish not to be invidious) symptoms of a spirit near akin to puritanic persecution: as well might a judge forbid a person arraigned to choose his own witnesses, as for a society composed of laity and clergy to take from the candidate his freedom of choice, and oblige him to become answerable to their self constituted court.

rather than to the conscience itself, to prove the worth of any action; for the conscience may be misinformed, and if so, it will not lead us in a right path. On this subject Mr. H. writes thus, page 14:—"I must say, that I should feel as an individual guilty of great dereliction of duty, if, having a hundred pounds at my disposal, and determining to devote that sum to the maintenance of a curate in some destitute parish, I did not also reserve to myself the liberty of being satisfied that the curate whom I was to maintain promised to become an able minister of the New Testament. . . . I should not however so much regard it as a right to be claimed; I should rather feel it to be a duty incumbent upon me to discharge, otherwise I might be expending my money, a talent for which I am accountable to God, not only wastefully, but injuriously;"—in other words, interference is claimed lest our talents, given us of God and devoted by us to his service, should become a curse and not a blessing, by sustaining a ministry which "would but serve to keep men in ignorance of the things they most needed to know, instead of such a ministry as tended to their salvation⁵."

Believing, as Mr. H. does, in the existence of such a frightful curse upon the land, I cannot but respect the motives which lead him to desire and seek its redress, though I totally disapprove of the means he would employ—the interference of the Society. Let us examine what is the nature of the Society's grants: they are made to incumbents to enable them to provide for the spiritual wants of their people; they must be viewed therefore in the light of endowments, with this only difference, they are not perpetual, but

⁵ I do not now stop to inquire to what extent the ministry called and ordained without the intervention of the Society, is liable to this heavy charge: page 13 would lead one to suppose that the evil is widely spread; and if so, the bishops would do well to consider seriously whether they had not better altogether resign the examining of the qualifications of such as are to be made ministers to the jurisdiction of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society.

may be withdrawn. Now does Mr. H. really intend, that, if I were to build and endow a church, and were to leave the patronage with the bishop, I should be "guilty of a great dereliction of duty?" We have a case very nearly to the point: in the last session a bill passed the legislature, empowering the trustees of the river Weaver, in Cheshire, to build and endow churches out of their funds; the patronage of these churches they vested in the bishop. The trustees are a mixed body of clergy and laity, something like the Pastoral-Aid Society. They do not part with their consciences by becoming an association; but they have, by this action, done what the Church Pastoral-Aid Society could not conscientiously have done; and, in the words of the vindicator of that Society, they have neglected "a duty incumbent upon them to discharge." I will not press here the slur cast upon the episcopal bench, which Mr. H.'s argument inevitably involves, because I do not believe it intended, viz. that its members are unfit to be intrusted with patronage; I only mention it, because this alone, I think, may induce Mr. H. to imagine that there is something wrong in his mode of reasoning, and that this slur upon the bishops is not exactly in agreement with ecclesiastical law. But I turn to the comparison instituted between the Society and the trustees of the Weaver, and the practice of the latter so evidently condemned by the former; and as we have no right to suppose either party to have acted in opposition to their consciences, it is evident one or other has a misinformed conscience.

I have glanced at some of the evils arising out of Mr. H.'s system, and his conscientious discharge of duty; others are to be found in Dr. Molesworth's letter: and I will now tell him that I do conceive that when he has conformed to the existing rules of the Church—that Church which is *divinely* appointed to call and send forth ministers to dispense the *blessings of salvation, and spread abroad the Gospel*

light, and thus bring sinners to Christ—he has then done his duty; that, as far as conscience is concerned, he may “lay him down at peace, and sleep,” without dread of having to answer for a misspent talent, for the responsibility will no longer lie with him, but with the Church; and she will have to answer, if negligent in the appointment of her ministers.

Speaking of the interference of the Society, Mr. H., page 14, remarks, he finds “no denial of this liberty on the part of the Church.” Possibly not; but this does not establish the right of any or every one to interfere in the choosing of ministers, merely because they give money to support them. The time was, when greater exertions than those of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society were made in the cause of God; and men gave lands, and parted with their wealth, and were ready even to shed their life’s blood for his Church; yet none who were true members of the Church thought they obtained thus a right to intrude beyond their province, and to presume to interfere in the appointment of ministers, when the Church had settled the mode and manner of choosing them; and therefore Mr. H. is probably quite correct in his statement that there is no denial of this liberty, and for this simple reason, because the Church never contemplated the interference of unauthorized persons.

I have now examined the three main points advanced in defence of the Society; there are two others, however, casually introduced, and, trivial as they may appear to me, yet, that I may not be accused of taking only a partial view of the case, it may be well briefly to notice them. The first of these occurs at the bottom of page 11, where Mr. H. sets forth the end for which the Society was formed. “It is, in one word, the salvation of souls:—the same end, in fact, for which the Church of England herself is constituted.” Now this cannot justify its interference, because from the earliest heresy which rent the

Church, down to the most delusive fallacy in religion which makes mockery of the boasted enlightenment of the present age, no sect, holding forth the doctrine of future reward and punishment, has existed, but it has professed a tender regard for "the salvation of souls."

The second will be found in the latter part of page 20, and which may be called the success of the Society: the passage I allude to is this—"He (Dr. M.) would be gratified to learn how large a proportion of the comparatively few incumbents whom we have ever requested to withdraw their nomination, have afterwards returned their thanks to us for our interposition," &c. Now here I remark again, an appeal to *success* by no means argues, much less establishes, right-dealing⁶: it is the sole prerogative of God to bring good out of evil; and therefore if our principle of action be wrong, and yet good spring from it, we must not too hastily apply the rule—"therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." The evil may not show itself at once; and as in all cases, so especially in this, does the abundance of God's mercy manifest itself. Success, then, where the principle of action is clearly wrong, I do maintain is no defence whatever. But let me be distinctly understood: I wish to charge the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, in the remarks I have made on the two last passages quoted from Mr. H.'s letter, with nothing more than may legitimately fall upon it; I do not charge it with not having tended to the salvation of souls in its operations, for I believe the contrary; I do not deny but that success has attended it in the choice of ministers, for those whom I have the pleasure to know who have received the Society's sanction, I believe to be good and faithful ministers; all

⁶ If success be taken as the criterion of truth, Mahommedanism had perhaps equal, if not greater, claims to it, a few centuries back, than Christianity.

I say is, *this* does not prove its perfect agreement with our ecclesiastical laws.

I believe *every* point adduced by Mr. H. in vindication of the Society's plan of proceeding has now been noticed; yet there are other points it may be advisable not to leave untouched. Now, at the foot of page 18, Mr. H. says, "Surely as an association of individuals using our own money—I do not merely say that we are free to use that money in the way we deem best—but what I feel is, that we are bound in conscience to do so." The case of conscience I have before remarked on; the former part of the sentence, relating to liberty in the use of our money, I cannot see that Dr. Molesworth—I am not aware that any one else in this land of toleration—has disputed; all I maintain is, that a Society which, according to Mr. H.'s showing, pages 16, 17, lays down as its rule that it cannot regard the incumbent's nomination and the episcopal license (including, of course the testimonial of the presbytery) as always^{*} sufficient—which yet the Church does deem sufficient, and which determines "to do whatever it may in addition"—such a Society, I do say, cannot be allowed to be in agreement with ecclesiastical law; it has no right to the title of Church; and by assuming it is, in fact, sailing, to use Dr. M.'s expression, under false colours.

At page 17 is a passage in which Mr. H. endeavours to prove that there is no interference with the incumbent's rights. Puerile is perhaps an odious term to apply, but does Mr. H. really imagine he has made out a case of non-interference? Let him look to the facts of the case:—An incumbent requires, but has no means of supporting, a curate; the Society signifies its willingness to make him a grant; the incumbent nominates,—the Society objects to the

^{*} The "*always*" has no business here; for the Society avows that it *never* admits the Church's testimonials as sufficient.

nomination, and refuses the grant; but *without* the aid of the Society the incumbent *cannot* have a curate; and can it honestly declare—"We do not say to the incumbent that he shall not have that same party as his curate?" It may not indeed use the words, but actions speak; and the Society does that which effectually hinders the incumbent from having the party as his curate. The whole passage relative to this is in fact a mere mockery of argument; and no wonder "that Dr. Molesworth, and other like objectors, do not see the reasonableness" of it.

I now go back to page 7 of Mr. H.'s letter. After stating, in the preceding page, what does and what does not, in his opinion, form a Church Society, he there defines the only sense in which he thinks a society can rightly be called a Church Society, viz. a society in accordance with Church of England principles. I by no means quarrel with his definition; but if the Church Pastoral-Aid Society is to be tested by it, its epithet of Church must be dropped. At page 6 Mr. H. says, I think correctly, that, "unless convocations be revived, we can have no real Church Societies;" he will, however, not deny that we may come more or less near to them. Let us, then, inquire what would most likely be the mode of establishing a society in convocation—say a society having for its object that of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, to assist incumbents in populous places. Would not the probable method of acting be, that, having deliberated on the matter, the convocation would proceed to incorporate the society, to appoint proper officers to govern, control, and carry out the objects intended? Perhaps, for this purpose, the convocation might see fit, as in the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, to associate laymen with the clergy; but of whatever order the officers might be, their authority would be *delegated*, not *self-constituted*. But does Mr. H. for one moment imagine it at all likely that

a convocation would come to his decision, that the present mode of calling and sending ministers is defective, insufficient; and that therefore it would delegate to a body composed of laymen or clergy, or a clerical committee appointed by them, powers like those claimed by the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, to which the whole episcopal bench must bow, so that the governors of the Church must henceforth be the governed? Yet this I have shown the practice of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society does virtually do; neither is there any force in the plea adduced for the Society's interference, page 17: "It should be borne in mind, that we are not attempting to legislate for the Church at large;" for it should also be borne in mind, that only the power, not the will, is wanting; and if this power was once obtained, the same conscience which urges the duty of legislating for a part, would urge the legislating for the whole Church; or, if this is not the case, how can Mr. H. justify an interference with one portion of the Church confessedly inapplicable and unsuited to the whole, when that Church is to exist by union, not division?

I will now state what, in the absence of a convocation, would appear to me to be the nearest approach to a society in accordance with Church of England principles. Suppose a number of persons, observant of the circumstances which gave rise to the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, and anxious to do something toward alleviating the spiritual misery they behold; they are Churchmen, they have a religious object in view, they wish to act on Church principles; what course shall they pursue? Shall they form themselves into a society, appoint their officers, enact a code of laws, the means and ways of dispensing their bounty, and then seek for their society episcopal support, and on that ground style *themselves* a Church Society? No; that, Mr. H.

admits, will not do. Shall they then make a declaration, that all the bishops shall be *ex-officio* members and governors, that is, delegate power to the bishops? No, that again will fail to render them a Church Society; for, it may be, a bishop may not recognise the power of the Society to delegate authority to him in Church matters, and so may decline the office proposed. How then shall they act? Surely, as Churchmen, they will, I apprehend, remember, that deference and submission to their superiors in ecclesiastical matters, is an important duty of a Churchman, and they will naturally turn to the heads—the authorised rulers of the Church—for counsel and advice: they will address the archbishop or bishops of the province, signify to them the object they have at heart, and their willingness to contribute of their wealth; request them, if the object meet with their approbation, to devise the most appropriate means of carrying it into effect; the bishops might perchance think the formation of a society to collect and distribute the funds, and to obtain information, the most feasible way of attaining the desired end: and a society, founded under these auspices, would, it appears to me, be as near an approach to a convocationally formed society, as present circumstances will admit of;—one against which, at all events, the accusation could never fairly be brought, that it was not framed on Church principles, since, whatever errors it had, they would not be of its own contriving, seeing that though dependent for its existence on the liberality of individuals, it would be appointed and disciplined by those who have authority in the Church.

From the Church I now turn to her ministers, and to the charges brought against them by Mr. H., pages 12, 13, and repeated again in other parts of his letter. Justice to the Church Pastoral-Aid Society extorted, Mr. H. informs us, his dark confes-

sion;—justice to the Church, both clergy and people, leads me here to notice that confession. Personal, I fear, some of my remarks must be, but I disclaim all ill-will towards Mr. H., whom I have not the pleasure of knowing, and whose letter, false as I imagine it in its arguments, I could be glad to imitate in its tone. Having said this, I turn to these sad passages—sad, if the statements they contain be incorrect, through the evil they are calculated to produce; but sadder still if correct, as marking a widely extended corruption in the Church: I say widely extended, because Mr. H. speaks of “many clergymen,” page 13; of seeing *continually* curates nominated unfit for the ministry, page 16; nay, to such extent is the evil represented to have grown, that without the interference of the Society, we cannot safely give our money, through fear of supporting a ministry which would but serve to keep men in ignorance of the things they most needed to know, instead of such a ministry as tended to salvation, page 14. Mr. H.’s strong appeal to conscience, in justification of the Society’s practice, forbids one to suppose that he would have found it in his heart to become thus the accuser of his brethren, unless he had *statistically* tested this corruption, and had *irrefragable* data for these alarming statements; still, though confident that Mr. H. could not conscientiously have allowed himself, in these remarks, unless he felt certain of his ground,—still we are tempted, for the Church’s sake, to look around with a fervent longing to see if we may not narrow the circle of corruption. We ask, is it not possible that there may be some mistake? May not prejudice have warped his understanding, or party feeling, unknown perhaps to himself, have obscured his vision, and led Mr. H. to miscalculate both the numbers involved in, and also the greatness of the calamity? A ray of hope does indeed come to us, if it be not profane

so to apply the Apostle's words, like "unto a light that shineth in a dark place," when we look to the characters of these delinquent ministers. Let Mr. H. describe them: they are represented as "highly respectable in their deportment before the world, upright, amiable, benevolent men, and active to a great extent in parochial duty;" "industrious clergymen." Equally with Mr. H. do I deprecate the use of party terms, such as orthodox, or evangelical; but I think he will allow, that the neutral ground is occupied by very few, and the number consequently small, of those who are not ranged on one side or the other. I know Mr. H. expresses a hope that these designations were fast disappearing from among us, but a glance at the pages of the "Record" newspaper, the generally acknowledged organ of one party, would, I think, soon dispel such a happy delusion. We ask then Mr. H. candidly to consider, whether he is clearly standing on the neutral ground—free alike from all prejudice, all party preference? which is almost to ask him whether he is a partaker or not of human nature? But if his mind have any bias either way, we ask further, and beg *him* to inquire, whether, if it be towards orthodox sentiments, he may not have been induced to include in his number of delinquents some evangelical clergymen, or *vice versâ*; their errors or mistakes being magnified in his eyes through the very existing difference in their respective methods of theologising? And has he made ample allowance for this in calculating his numbers?

Let us examine also the nature of the evil and its true character; and here also we are thankful that there is ground to hope that we are not fallen so low as Mr. H.'s remarks, page 14, might lead us to suppose. Attend to one ingredient in the character of these delinquents, "upright;" surely this one beautiful and *admitted* trait in their character is sufficient ground for something more than hope that the Scrip-

tural Services of the Church⁸, so suited to edification, have been by such men faithfully performed, and the Sacraments duly administered. This is indeed a mighty consolation, which does away with more than half the dreaded evil, and confines it to preaching and public teaching. Mr. H. does say indeed, in treating of the delinquent ministers, that their "personal character, in its influence on others, does not tend to advance the tone of practical religion." Strange fact! and difficult to understand! when the personal character of these men is considered "upright! amiable! benevolent! and active to a great extent in parochial duty!" unless in truth character and example have no weight; but, if I gather his meaning correctly, it is chiefly to the public teaching that the evil is confined⁹. Now again I earnestly beseech Mr. H. to consider whether the diseased state of the Church in this respect is of that alarming nature he describes it? I can find in his pages no direct charge of teaching heretical doctrines urged against this large body of the parochial clergy; it is rather a deficiency of setting forth the great pervading topics of the Gospel; if so, the evil is brought within still narrower compass. And has Mr. H. considered in each case the situation of the clergyman, and the nature of his charge? Has he, in computing the extent of the evil, borne in mind, that variety in spiritual sustenance is often needed according to the state of the congregation? that repentance, faith, or works, the fruit of faith, may profitably, from

⁸ I may remark here, that the change of appointed lessons, and the occasional alteration of words in some of the prayers, forbidden by the Act of Uniformity, 14 Car. II. is practised nearly exclusively by those termed the Evangelical Clergy, but I trust by no large portion of these.

⁹ It might be a question for the bishops, supposing Mr. H.'s evidence correct, whether they should not call in their licenses to preach, and allow only the reading of the Homilies. Will Mr. H. and the *Society* recommend it? Will they make it a condition in giving a grant?

circumstances, require to be more prominently advanced in one place than in another? and that, therefore, a difference may be wisely and purposely made, of which the reason may have escaped his notice? And thus again the corruption alluded to by him may be lessened, and as the evil diminishes, so also does the number of delinquents. And therefore we ask again, has he, in making his estimate of unfaithful preachers, considered that the worth of the labourer in the Gospel is not to be measured by his eloquence and attractive qualities, and that many a quiet, unobtrusive man, with no brilliant talents to commend him, still humbly seeks to do his part, and is often blessed in his work, while higher and more energetic spirits fail? "for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Has Mr. H. also given due weight, in making his calculation, to the following passages: Romans xii. 6, 7, 8; 1 Cor. xii. the whole chapter; Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13?

It is painful, indeed, to put these questions, but I am troubled at the gloomy prospect presented to our view in Mr. H.'s letter; they are questions, moreover, Mr. H. should have been careful to solve before he made his charge. Can he have omitted to solve them? Has he deceived himself as to the data on which his charge is founded? Hardly possible! for then all the managers of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society must have been equally deluded; and though Mr. H. intimates that this is the first time he has noticed this appalling state of the Church publicly, he lets us know that it is not the first time it has been publicly acted upon: he, a former secretary of the Society, conversant therefore with its operations, identifies it with the plan, and adduces it as the entire vindication of the Society's interference; an evil, then, no secret to the initiated. I am anxious, seriously anxious, to prove the Society and Mr. H. wrong, for the Church's sake. The Society

is extensive in its operations, and is mighty for good or evil; but if founded on wrong principles, sooner or later they will tell; and if it has formed those principles, and framed itself, as I believe it has, on erroneous evidence, the sooner it retraces its steps the better, both for those who manage it, and for the Church at large: and as regards Mr. H. as a lover of the Church, he would rejoice to find that he had miscalculated the depth of her degradation. But can he, we ask again, have been deceived in his deductions? Mark these passages in his letter! setting forth, on the one hand, the extent of the evil, and denying it on the other.

Extent of Evil.

I should not, however, so much regard it (interference) as a right to be claimed; I should rather feel it to be a duty incumbent upon me to discharge, otherwise I might be expending my money, a talent for which I am accountable to God, not only wastefully, but injuriously: I might be sustaining a ministry which, from its deficiency, would but serve to keep men in ignorance of the things they most needed to know.—*Vide p. 14.*

We do see *continually* that curates are nominated by incumbents and are licensed by bishops, whose ministry is not such as comes up to the requirements of the Church.—*Vide p. 16.*

Denial of it.

He would be gratified, I think, to learn how large a proportion of the *comparatively few* incumbents, whom we have ever requested to withdraw their nomination, have afterwards returned their thanks to us for our interposition.—*Vide p. 20.*

That our clerical members are *always right in their decisions* I am far from saying.—*Vide p. 21.*

I have remarked on these passages, except that from page 21, before; but thus placed in juxtaposition, the extract, page 14, speaks of a vast corruption, entitling us to withhold our money, except under certain conditions;—that from page 16, by the word "*continually*," confirms the meaning attached to the former passage, as correct; and this latter, if quoted further, will be seen to have *special reference* to the *experience* of the Society, while the extract from

page 20 converts the many, intimidated by "continually," into *comparatively few*, and this number is lessened again by the admission that the examiners, page 21, are not always right. I do not hesitate to say, I was startled at the position assumed by Mr. H., and by him put forward as the Society's; but as soon as I became aware of the fallacy of his argument, in other parts of his letter, I found comfort and encouragement. He must be aware that if, from his statement, founded upon evidence which has come before the Society, the delinquents are *few* instead of *many*, that the gross and flagrant cases of delinquency are *very few*,—that the services of the Church are not tampered with—that the evil is of a negative rather than a positive character: the not holding forth, as conspicuously as might be desired, certain articles of faith, of which, however, concerning the prominence to be given to them, the great and wise, and good, have differed,—then his and the Society's plea of interference is inadmissible, and must fall to the ground, as founded on non-existing facts, for it is *widely-extended* delinquency of the clergy that is urged to justify the intervention of the Society.

I trust I am correct in this train of argument, which tends to lessen the dread darkness in which the Church was represented to be shrouded; but oh! that those accusations had never seen light, which Mr. H. has brought against the ministers of the Church: for who shall reckon upon the consequences? Doubtless he never, as he penned the words, thought of the mischief he might be doing to the Gospel cause; he was intent on the defence of his favourite Society (though I suspect his apology or vindication will have done more to injure that Society than any act of its own). I said, I remarked on Mr. H.'s confession, in justice to the Church, both clergy and people: and I now therefore request Mr. H. to consider and see what he has done. He

knew full well that his letter would circulate, not alone amongst the clergy, but the laity also ;— amongst those of the latter order, many there would be who might often not be furnished with the opportunity of examining and judging correctly ; and what has he taught them ? Why this ! that though their minister be *upright, amiable, benevolent, and active to a great extent in parochial duty, yet henceforth to mistrust him !* And if Mr. H.'s argument is worth any thing, the degraded state of ministers is such that the people should put reliance in none, unless sanctioned by the Society¹. Alas ! that a clergyman should have published such opinions !—but I forbear. May God be pleased to heal these perilous divisions !

I have in a former passage admitted the truth of Mr. H.'s remarks ; I admit them only to a certain extent. I will give him the advantage of extensive experience, claiming *very* little for myself ; yet do I think, as I have already argued, his charge of delinquency *generally* unfounded ; but yet I will not go so far as to say that *no* unfaithful ministers are to be found. And it may be asked of me on this admission, are we not to seek to remedy the evil ? You quarrel with the line of conduct we pursue, what method would you adopt ? I answer, none of my own devising, but such as the Church herself provides, and such as Mr. H. casually refers to when he mentions the prayers in the Ember weeks, but which, alas ! he seems merely to recommend as serviceable, in his opinion, to arrest the evil ;—not because the Church has appointed them as a preventive of the evil, and that he is bound to obey her in the use of them. But this is not

¹ Mr. H. asserts, the managers of the Society are *not party men* ; but unless acted upon by some Shibboleth of party, it is difficult to understand how they could all be so grievously deluded as to summon up this bugbear of delinquency, to the great danger of the Church and of religion.

all I ask, where are our chastening vigils—our penitential fasts—our holy festivals, gone?—where the daily public sacrifice of prayer and praise, and thanksgiving?—where our frequent communions?—where our willing obedience, which, as to the Redeemer, so also to his spouse, the Church, becomes the test and evidence of our love? Surely we are not clear in this matter: and can we conceive any one judgment, in a national point of view, or as respects our eternal interests, more sad or better suited as a punishment of such dereliction, as that the Almighty should be provoked to send amongst us unfaithful feeders of the flock? Questions, these, for solemn consideration;—"Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Rev. ii. 5.) Who indeed shall declare what the effect would have been, if daily public prayer had been maintained—if the sacred fire of devotion had never been allowed to go out on our national altars? Faith forbids us to believe but that the Church would be purer in herself, more a blessing to others; and that with the advance of popery and infidelity, we should not be now pleading to Government for Church extension, and pleading in vain. And this brings me to remark, in conclusion, on what appears to me to be the origin of the Society's interference, and not of that alone, but of the various and novel efforts² to bring men to salvation, put forth day by day, operating strongly for a season, and then languishing away to make place for the trial of some fresh experiment,—*want of faith* on the one hand, and *spiritual pride* on the other. Our faith has

² I might instance the Temperance Society. Christianity seemed to have failed to do its part: a languid faith therefore deemed it necessary to resort to other means; and thus reliance on human efforts, took the place of a firm and alone trust in God, and men were taught to abstain, because of their pledge, not because God required it as a duty.

suffered from the temper of the times, it has no sobriety or stability, it lives by excitement, it cannot watch and wait, the trial is too much for it, the appointed means of salvation are looked on as unsuited to the day; that which has availed for centuries is deemed obsolete; a feverish anxiety succeeds, and we look around to find some less tardy way to the attainment of our end, and gradually and imperceptibly our trust in God is thus loosened, and while we least think it, reliance put upon our own inventions and exertions.

P.S. I have, with many others, from the first formation of the Society, always objected to "lay readers;" and I know that many of those who support, and some even of those who receive, the grants of the Society, are sceptical as to the propriety of employing them, and could well wish this cause of offence to others removed. It is true, Dr. Molesworth, in his letter, does not offer any strong objection to them, but as their existence was alone the reason which has prevented me from becoming a subscriber to the Society,—for, till lately, I was perfectly ignorant of the meaning attached to "proof," in the language of the society,—I may shortly state why I think them so undesirable. It is not that, as in the case of the interference of the Society already treated of, there is no precedent for them in the Church, for the Church, I am aware, had once a more vigorous existence, and presented a more refreshing picture—when she had offices, not for the clergy only, but for the laity also, so that, from the noble to the peasant, each might bear his part, and be interested in the labour of love: but now a blight has come over the Church, and impaired her usefulness and hold upon the people: inroads have been made upon her discipline, and she cannot now, as once, restrain and correct the waywardness of her children: she cannot prevent, nor can the Society

prevent, (and in this danger my objection centres,) lay readers from becoming dissenting preachers, and drawing off members from the Church; and, besides, the office being now obsolete, I cannot recognise the right of a society to re-establish it; and it would I think be acting therefore more on Church principles, and more safely, if it were left to the bishops, in their respective dioceses, to recommend, as they thought fit, the revival of the office to the notice of their clergy.

THE END.







